

VZCZCXRO8222
PP RUEHBC RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHDIR RUEHKUK
DE RUEHIHL #0066 1841417
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 021417Z JUL 08
FM REO HILLAH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1099
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHIHL/REO HILLAH 1165

UNCLAS HILLAH 000066

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IZ](#) [IR](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#)
SUBJECT: BABIL PC ENDS BOYCOTT OF U.S.G.

REF: Hillah 00059

11. (U) This is a PRT Babil cable.

12. (U) SUMMARY: Babil Provincial Council Chairman Muhammad Ali Hussayn al-Massudi (PCC) and Governor Salam Salih Mahdi al-Muslimawi agreed to end a two-week boycott of all U.S. entities working out of the al-Hillah Regional Embassy Office (REO) during a June 30 meeting with the Babil Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and REO-based Coalition Forces (CF). The REO received unofficial word that the PC passed a resolution effectively boycotting the REO during its June 17 meeting. Despite dozens of attempts over the ensuing two weeks, said resolution was not delivered to the PRT or CF until it was deemed moot by the PCC and Governor at the end of the June 30 meeting. END SUMMARY.

13. (U) In a drawn out, and at times heated discussion, the PCC and Governor finally agreed to terminate a two week-old boycott of the REO during a June 30 meeting in the Governor's office. During their June 17 meeting the Babil PC resolved to boycott the REO and CF indefinitely in response to recent CF operations in the province. The PC resolution: "1) suspended all PC activities for the ensuing three days in protest of recent CF raids in al-Hillah and mortar fire originating from the REO compound; 2) declined cooperation with the "American side" until the outcome of an investigation of previous CF raids, including one conducted in the al-Askari neighborhood on June 14, are made public; and 3) demanded compensation for all Babil citizens who fell victim of the aforementioned raids."

14. (U) Despite dozens of requests by the PRT and CF, the PC refused to furnish the REO with a copy of the resolution. Instead the PCC insisted that this protest was voted for by a clear majority of PC members following the June 14 raid, a CF raid on April 3rd that resulted in IP and civilian casualties and damage to the Hillah Teaching hospital, and the regular outgoing mortar fire originating on the REO compound. He said that the PC members "feel pressure from the citizens to take this position to stop these repeated assaults and to apply pressure on friendly forces to halt these attacks." According to the PCC, the only way to end the boycott was to provide a condolence letter and financial compensation to the family of the deceased. An official letter was sent on June 24 and a condolence payment was made by CF on June 26, yet the boycott persisted.

15. (SBU) Following several instances of various PC members and directors general cancelling meetings with the "American Side", the PRT reached out yet again to the PCC and Governor to ask why they continued to insist on boycotting the REO. [Note: Ironically CF continued to meet with all of their ISF interlocutors despite the boycott. Additionally, some PC members continued to meet with the PRT, but explained that they were violating the resolution. End note.] The PCC blamed the Governor and vice versa. They both finally agreed to the June 30 meeting - everyone sitting together in one room. After an hour of belabored discussion on the responsibilities of the CF vice the PRT, the Governor finally said he thought the

resolution was clear; the REO needed to submit a letter and condolence payment to the families of any civilian victims. Shocked, the PRT iterated that this was completed nearly a week prior, which was documented in letters to both the Governor and PCC. The Governor and PCC then conceded to ending the boycott. [Note: There was discussion as to the innocence of another of the "civilians" killed in the April 14 raid. The CF commander recommended that the PCC provide some evidence that he could take back to the investigating body for further review. The PCC agreed. End note.] Prior to departing the meeting, the PCC handed the PRT officers a copy of the original resolution as passed on June 17.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: As the provincial election campaign season heats up, the PRT expects more political posturing similar to the boycott. Both provincial leaders are eschewing the "American Side" out of fear that close association with the PRT will not help the governor in his on-going attempts to secure a slot on any ISCI-affiliated slate (reftel), or the PCC in his efforts to raise funds to support his own start-up political entity. END COMMENT.

YANAWAY